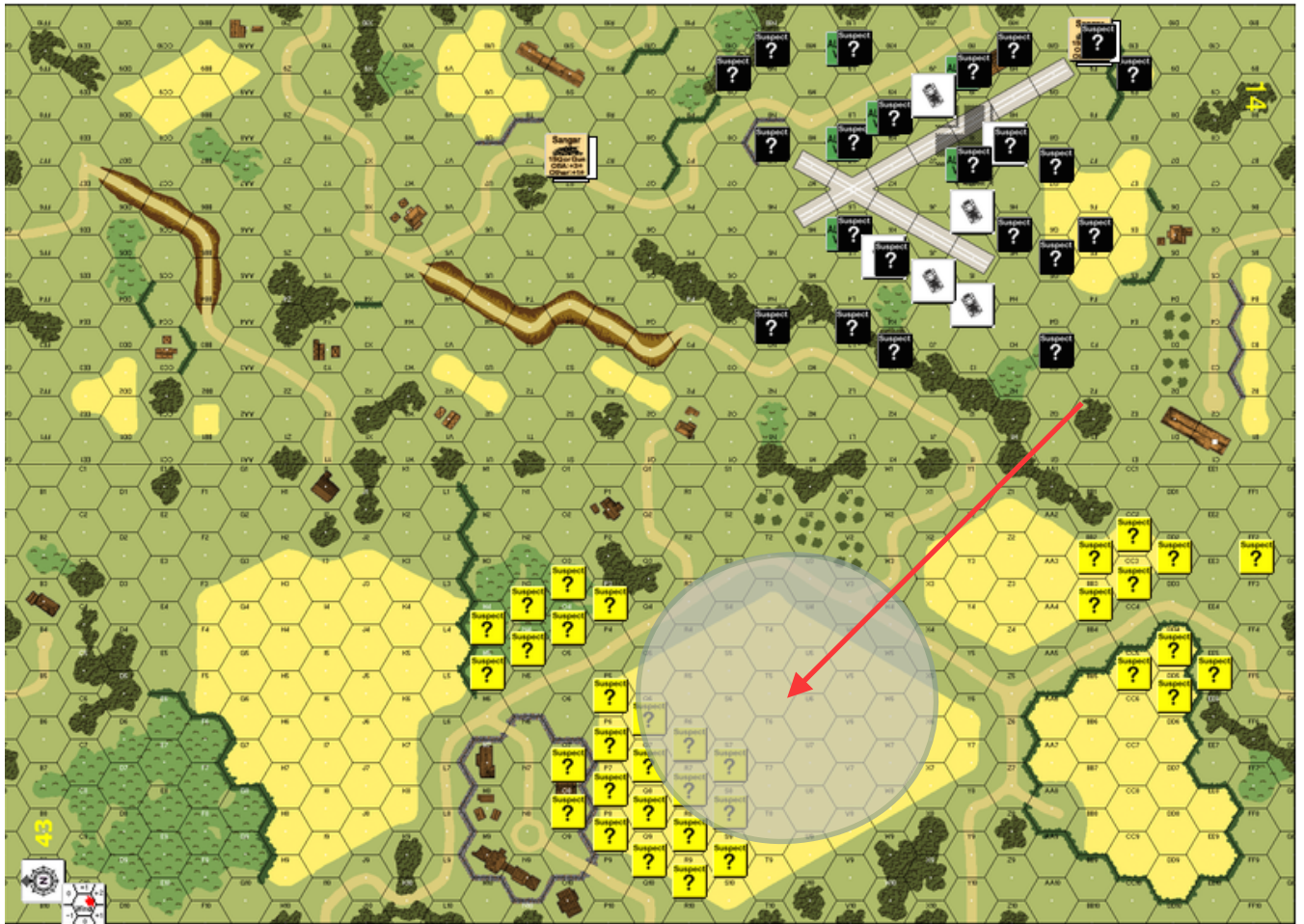


13 July 1942

Situation At Start:

1x 10-2; 1x 9-1; 1x 8-0; 8x 548; 3x 468; 2x 248; 3x LMG; 3x MMG

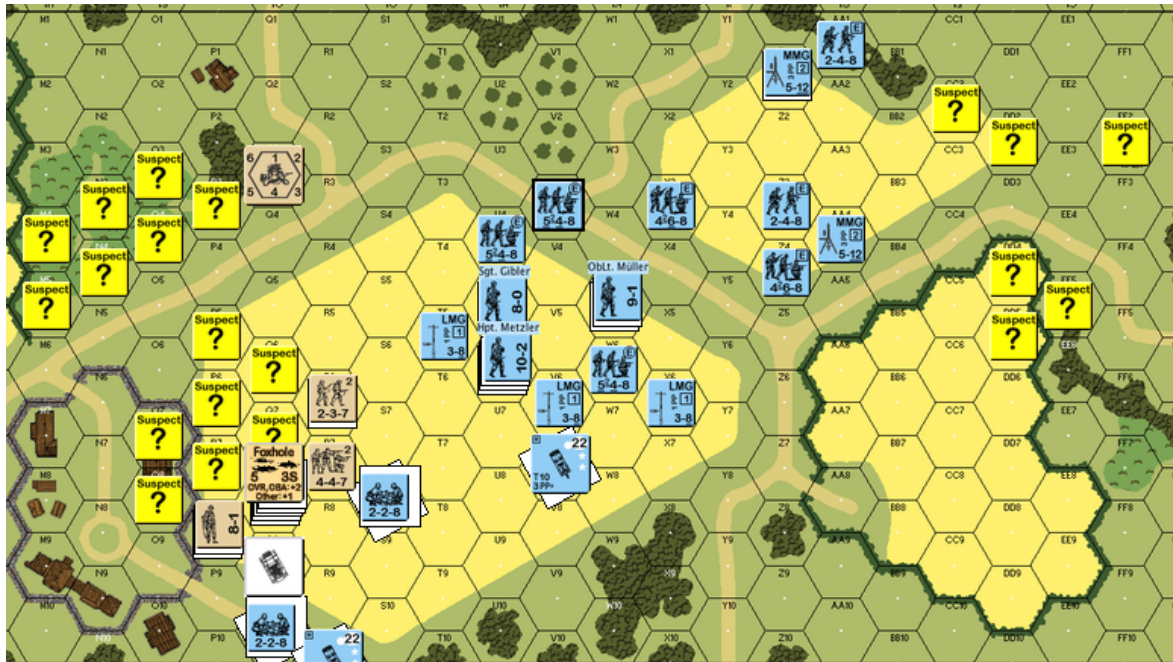
Temporary assets attached: 3x SdKfz (Kettenkrad); 3x 228; 2x 75* RCL; 1x 105* RCL; 3x Bf 109F; 1x Bf 110D; 6x Go242 gliders.



Dawn. Midway through July, and after a lengthy and extensive pounding by the Luftwaffe and the Italian Navy, word has come that Operation Herkules—the assault on Malta—is on! The target for 3rd Battalion, Kompanie C is a small improved airfield located on the SE corner of Malta. Given the presence of AA guns, a drop directly on the airfield is deemed too dangerous. Kompanie C's landing zone is a large wheat field to the west of the airfield. The LZ may be near a possible British unit's bivouac area, but it is believed any British troops in the area can be quickly overwhelmed before moving on to take the airfield.

German Turn 1: As Kompanie C drifted silently toward the ground, safely away from the AA guns at the airfield, extremely accurate long-range fire from a 40mm Bofors cannon riddled and destroyed the lastmost glider with its RCL gun and crew as it approached its LZ. All but one of the gliders overshot their LZs and, as feared, landed nearly on top of a British bivouac area. In contrast, the Fallschirmjagers came down slightly SE of the planned LZ, but intact as a unit. There is at least a reinforced platoon of British infantry very near to where the gliders landed. The guns, Kettenkrads and their crews will be left

to fend for themselves. The Fallschirmjagers cannot take the time to save them and have any hope of securing the airfield as well. Situation after the German forces landed:

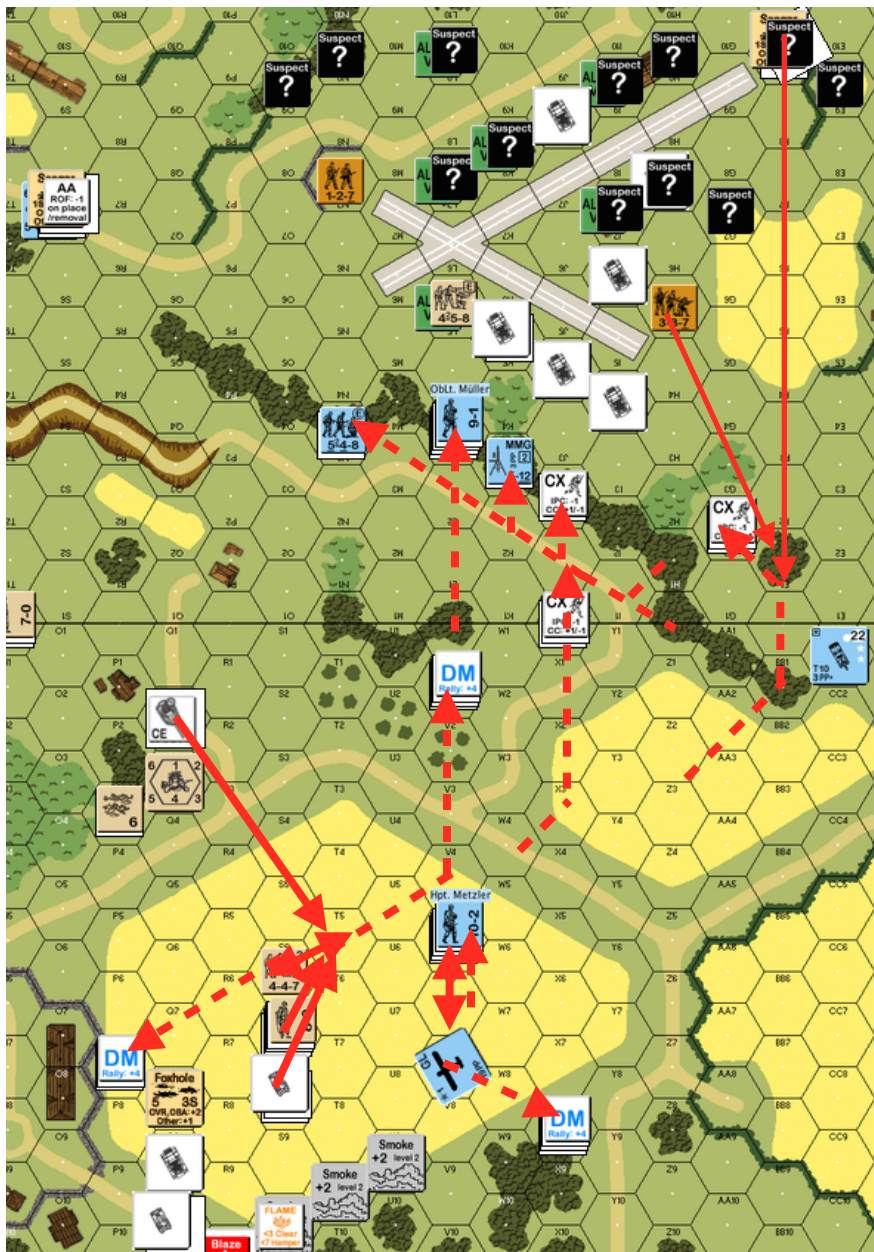


Allied Turn 1: The bivouacked British troops looked to be more interested in finishing off the gliders, their crews and capturing or destroying their cargo. As the Fallschirmjagers gathered themselves for the advance on the airfield, 12-15 Brits charged Hauptmann Metzler and the troops he was organizing. Outnumbering the charging Brits by more than 2:1, a hail of point blank fire stopped the charge cold. The Brits scurried away under the cover of the wheat. British troops from the bivouac assaulted and destroyed the two gliders that carried the remaining German guns. The Germans would make the assault on the airfield without any heavy weapons.

German Turn 2: Oberleutnant Müller took half of Kompanie C toward the airfield, gathering weapons canisters as they moved. Hauptmann Metzler and Sgt. Gibler formed a rearguard in the wheat field, exchanging fire with the British. British troops had captured two of the gliders and the RCL guns. One gun was turned on a glider, setting it ablaze along with its Kettenkrad cargo. The other RCL, was destroyed when the British troops tried to fire it. Of the six loaded gliders sent along as support for Kompanie C, only one Kettenkrad was able to successfully unload and escape the enemy bivouac area. Oblt. Müller's men reached the treeline west of the airfield. Aside from some wrecked fighter planes near the runway, only a few enemy troops could be seen.

Allied Turn 2: With the gliders and their cargo destroyed, the British troops began pressuring Hauptmann Metzler, Sgt. Gibler and their troops. The British assault was disjointed and piecemeal. While the Germans fired well enough to blunt the initial probes, it became clear a fighting withdrawal would be in order for the Germans to get clear of the wheat field and rejoin Oblt. Müller's force. While the attack in the wheat field was unfolding, a Bren gun carrier approached Oblt. Müller—who froze! Still, the squad carrying an MMG tried to stop the carrier. The MG fire did no damage. The carrier swerved away, moving on toward the fight in the wheat field.

German Turn 3: Oblt. Müller gathered his half of Kompanie C and moved them along a road next to a treeline. On the other side of the trees, lay the airfield. A probe by one German squad drew fire from a

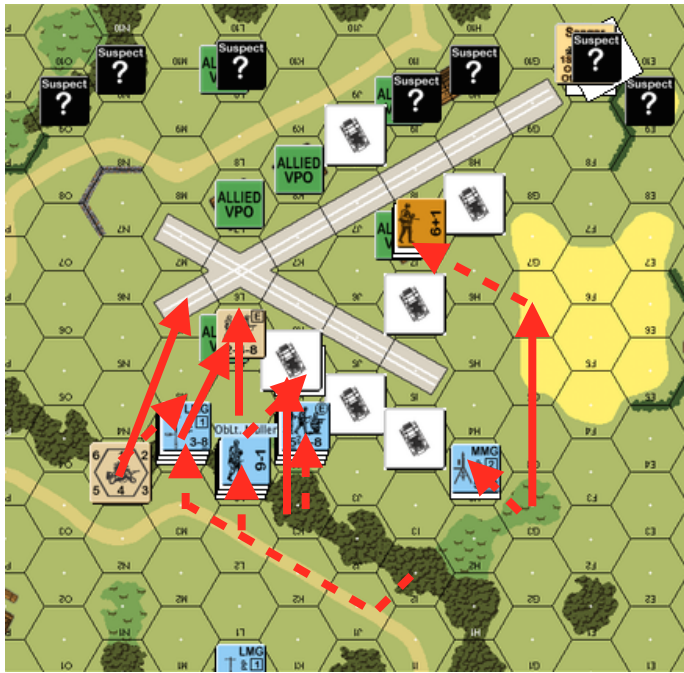


British 40mm gun, but to no harmful effect for the attackers. Hpt. Metzler's and Sgt. Gibler's rearguard attempted to disengage and join Oblt. Müller's assault on the airfield. While Hpt. Metzler's men were able to blunt the assault on their position, Sgt. Gibler's men were only partially successful. The Brits concentrated their fire on Sgt. Gibler and his men, causing them to retreat in disarray. In a way, their retreat was fortunate as it also worked to move them closer to the main body of Kompanie C. Seeing Gibler's men break and retreat, Hpt. Metzler kept his troops in good order and positioned to slow down any attempt at pursuit by the British.

Allied Turn 3: During the retreat, Sgt. Gibler died from wounds he received in the firefight in the wheat field. British NCOs and officers worked to rally their troops who had wavered in the wheat field fight with the Germans. A British Bren gun carrier moved

close to Hpt. Metzler's position in an attempt to check the Germans as they disengaged. Hpt. Metzler's men gave far better than they received as they slowly withdrew, Allied casualties continued to mount. At the airfield, the British and Maltese troops took casualties as they exchanged fire with Oblt. Müller's force.

German Turn 4: Hpt. Metzler's men continued firing at the pursuing British troops and finally broke them up and drove them away. They could now turn their attention to the British Bren carrier to their immediate right. Oblt. Müller's men continued to inflict casualties on the Allies near the NE-SW runway. They pressed forward, expecting the Allied fire to drive them back toward the treeline, but there was no such fire. The airfield seemed oddly undermanned for such an important military objective.



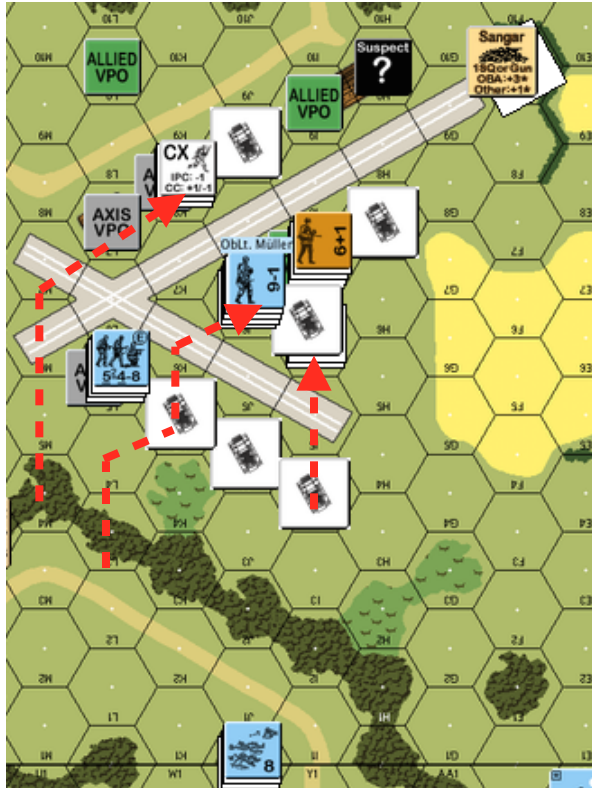
Allied Turn 4: Three Me109s appeared overhead. One 109 went after the AA gun north of the airfield, the other two attacked the AA gun at the end of the NW-SE runway from different directions. The AA gun crews were very good. They caused the first attacks by the 109s to break off. However, the second 109 to attack the SE AA gun dropped its bomb and caused the gun's crew to scramble away for better cover. The British carrier drove right into Hpt. Metzler's position, Bren gun blazing. Neither the carrier crew or the Fallschirmjagers were able to gain an advantage. Oblt. Müller's men kept up their fire on the British positions. The British resistance was weakening. Soon, there would be nothing preventing the Germans from taking control of the entire facility.

German Turn 5: Sgt. Gibler's men regained their composure following their retreat to the woods. Cpl. Dief harangued the men. Their bloodlust rose. The desire to avenge Sgt. Gibler and their comrades overwhelmed them. Cpl. Dief and the squad looked around for a target for their anger. They saw a British ATR crew creeping toward Hpt. Metzler's melee with the Bren carrier. Those British were undoubtedly part of the force that had driven them out of the wheat field. Cpl. Dief's men would charge that ATR crew, kill it and rejoin Hpt. Metzler all in one move. At the airfield, fire from Oblt. Müller's men shattered the resistance from the British troops in the control tower. They forced the British from the tower and left the trees to continue moving forward to take the rest of the field. Cpl. Dief's charge drew some poorly aimed fire from some British troops surprised to see such a dash. Once upon the ATR crew, it was dispatched with no difficulty. Likewise, Hpt. Metzler's men were able to dispose of the Bren carrier. A well-placed hand grenade set it ablaze.

Allied Turn 5: With Cpl. Dief's men rejoining Hpt. Metzler and the destruction of the carrier, the Allied troops gave the Germans a wide berth. Any fire was at long range and ineffective. Any Allied troops that got too close to Metzler's position were driven off, with heavy casualties. A Stuka joined the 109s over the airfield. With one AA gun crew driven away from their gun, the planes concentrated on the other AA gun north of the airfield. The Stuka led the way. The AA fire was well off the mark. The Stuka's bomb was not. The bomb missed the AA gun, but the concussion killed the AA gun crew outright. After the second AA gun crew was put out of commission, the planes flew off to find other targets on Malta. Oblt. Müller's men continued clearing the Allies from positions at the airfield. Once Kompanie C reunited at the airfield, it would be difficult for the Allies to dislodge it. For Hpt. Metzler's force, unfortunately, the fire from the burning carrier, spread to the wheat, and the men had to run for their lives to avoid being burned alive.

German Turn 6: After Hpt. Metzler's men finished their dash away from the carrier fire, the Hauptmann began acting very strangely—then collapsed and died! The medic said it was a heart attack, as no wounds could be found on his body. With the death of Hpt. Metzler, a full platoon of Fallschirmjagers were left, disorganized, milling about in a small woods, waiting for orders. Oblt. Müller's men adopted

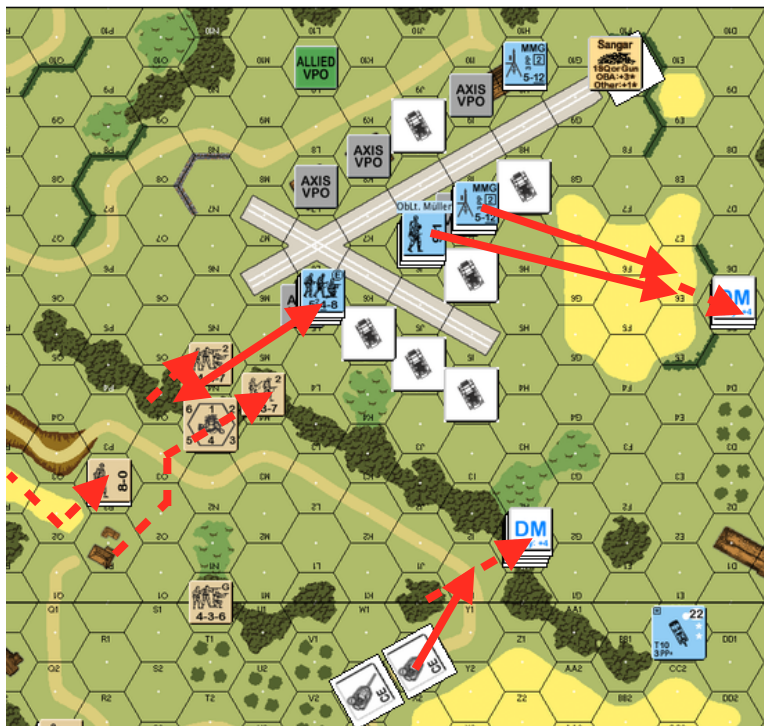
a “fire and move” tactic. The “fire” portion was wholly ineffective with two MGs malfunctioning. Sensing that the airfield was nearly deserted, Oblt. Müller boldly ordered his men forward to secure the remaining buildings before the rest of Kompanie C rejoined them. While Oblt. Müller taking control of the airfield, Cpl. Dief suddenly panicked. It was now apparent why the airfield has been so deserted. The bulk of the Allied troops, rather than maintaining a defense at the airfield, were on patrol when the airdrop occurred. Now, the Allies would be on their way back to expel Oblt. Müller and his men.



Allied Turn 6: As the British troops moved toward the airfield, Oblt. Müller’s men finally drove away the last few known Maltese guerrillas from the airfield’s ordinance shed.

German Turn 7: Atmospheric conditions had been wreaking havoc with the German radios. Cpl. Dief lost contact with Hpt. Metzler and Oblt. Müller. With the carrier fire spreading to the E-SE of his position and the British firing at long range from two different spots, Cpl. Dief panicked again. Hpt. Metzler’s men were still

disorganized with no leadership, no orders and no direction. Even Oblt. Müller lost effective communication with his men. In spite of his comm problems, enough of Müller’s men were able to direct fire on the Maltese guerrillas to drive them completely away from the airfield. One of Müller’s squads moved to clear the barracks, was ambushed and ended up in a melee with a half dozen British troops.

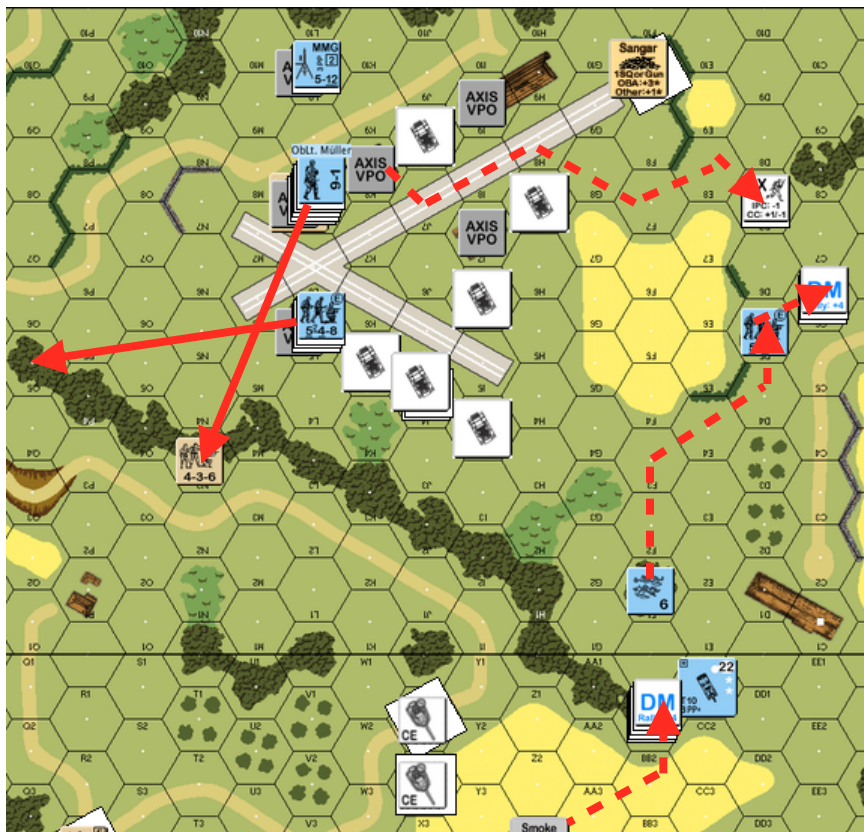


Allied Turn 7: Two A9 Cruiser tanks arrived to support the British effort to retake the airfield. When the tanks drew near to Cpl. Dief’s squad, they fired a captured British ATR at the lead tank and hit it, but the shell caused no damage. The tanks drove on and neared (the late) Hpt. Metzler’s men, who were still in disarray. Upon seeing the tanks, the men broke and ran. The lead tank opened up with its MGs, killing several of the fleeing Fallschirmjagers. Some British troops reached the treeline near the airfield and exchanged fire with the German troops in the control tower. In the barracks, the Germans eliminated the British troops, but not without taking an equal number of casualties themselves. Save for the HQ building across the road from the hangars,

Kompanie C was in almost complete control of the airfield.

German Turn 8: Despite sniper fire, Oblt. Müller's men finished clearing the airfield's buildings and captured the occupied HQ building. A British probe toward the control tower was cut to pieces by deadly small arms and MG fire. A few of Hpt. Metzler's men finally pulled themselves together and moved to join Müller's force. It was at this point that Cpl. Dief began to feel very alone. With British troops in the distance to the NE and SW, British tanks to the SE and the fire in the wheat field spreading to their immediate rear, Dief and his men made a run for it. They dashed through some wheat that had just begun to burn, but as soon as they ran onto the road, the tanks' commanders opened up with their outside turret MGs, pinning Dief and his men in the open on the road. Thinking quickly, Cpl. Dief led his men into the smoke drifting to the SE from the burning carrier. Under cover of the smoke, Dief hoped to get away from the British, their armor and rejoin the rest of Kompanie C at the airfield.

Allied Turn 8: Some British troops riding bicycles arrived. It appeared the German attack was drawing a hodge-podge of Allied units in response. For some reason, the British tanks turned their attention to Cpl. Dief and his men and their attempt to use the smoke to cover their movement away from the British force. Small groups of Allied troops continued to make probes toward the airfield. These probes were met with a devastating volume of fire from Oblt. Müller's men. Piecemeal attacks by a squad here or there were not going to force the Fallschirmjagers from the airfield. It would take a coordinated assault by a much larger infantry force, the tanks and, perhaps, some artillery for the Allies to prevail. That larger infantry force appeared to be on the way.



German Turn 9: The Germans were now scanning the treeline west of the airfield for Allied troops to appear. Their fire was disrupting and causing casualties among the Allies' units before they could gather themselves to even attempt an assault on the airfield. Another of Hpt. Metzler's squads reorganized themselves and moved to clear a house south of the airfield where wounded Allied troops had been seen to take shelter. Cpl. Dief's use of the smoke as cover saved him and his men from the immediate threat posed by the British tanks. They reached the relative safety of the treeline to the SW of the airfield.

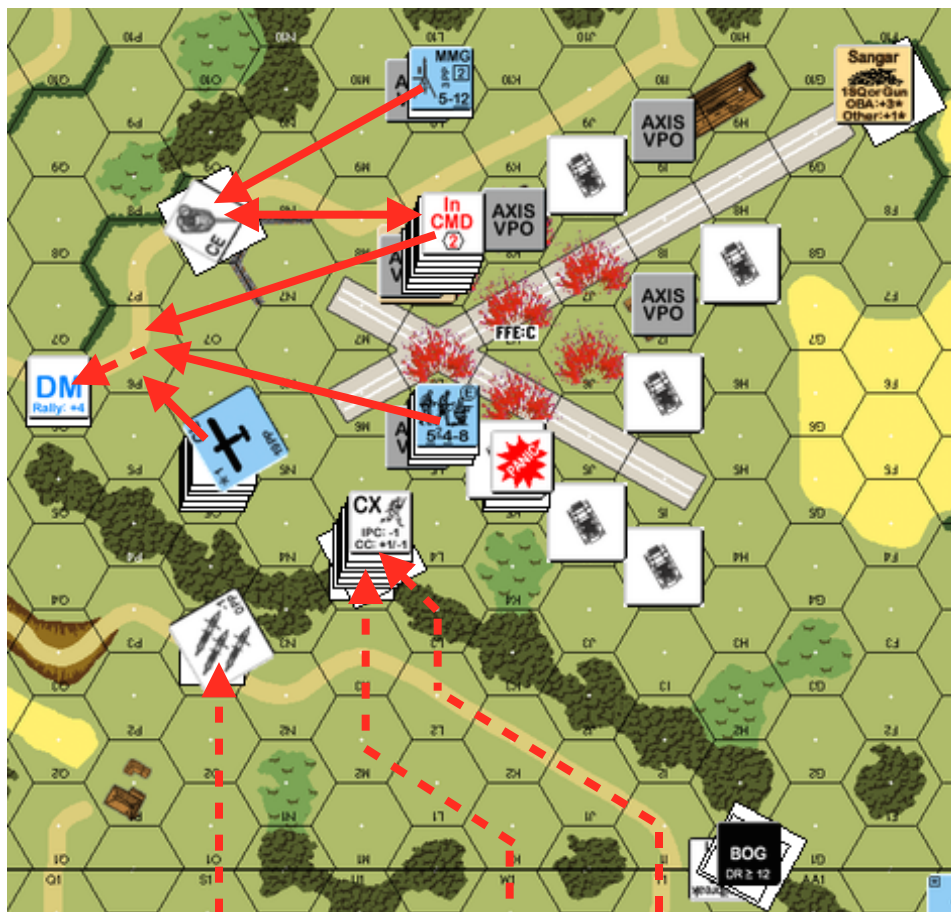
Allied Turn 9: The wind started to gust. Fortunately for Cpl. Dief, his men no longer needed the smoke for cover. British troops continued to approach the airfield in piecemeal fashion and they continued to be shot down as they left the cover of the trees. The British armor continued to fire at and pursue Cpl. Dief and his men. Cannon and MG fire from the British tanks began to take its toll. Cpl. Dief's force

began to wither away. The Allied troops continued their march toward the airfield. It was not clear whether the Allies would continue to arrive as separate groups (and be destroyed separately) or would gather into a united force and attack en masse.

German Turn 10: Oblt. Müller's men continued to wait for the British to attack. A wounded Luftwaffe pilot came out of hiding. His effort to join Kompanie C (at least temporarily) thwarted by the presence of a British platoon also on its way to the airfield.

Allied Turn 10: The British troops continued their rather deliberate advance toward the airfield. The only units attempting to force the issue were the Cruiser tanks—one driving very close to the airfield HQ building, the other becoming bogged as it attempted to traverse the treeline to attack Cpl. Dief and the remainder of his force. As Oblt. Müller's men concentrated on the treeline and the expected British attack, a dozen Maltese guerrillas surprised Müller and his men in Hangar #1. Even the surprise of an ambush can be a relative thing when the odds are stacked 5:1 against the attacker. The ambushers' attack was short-lived and wholly unsuccessful.

German Turn 11: A glider with a squad of assault engineers was the first German aircraft to use the newly captured airfield. The glider overshot the end of the runway. And that was fortunate, as at the exact moment the glider skidded off the runway, a British artillery barrage hit the airfield. Although the barrage landed squarely on the airfield's runways, Oblt. Müller's men were largely unaffected. The only German position hit by the artillery was Oblt. Müller's own position in Hangar #1. Cpl. Dief finally made contact with the Germans at the airfield. Dief assisted in the elimination of the Maltese guerrilla leader that had been hiding out south of the airfield.



Allied Turn 11: The British artillery continued. Oblt. Müller did his best to keep up the morale of his troops, but the shelling was beginning to wear on his men. Lacking any true AT weapons, the Germans unsuccessfully tried to kill the Cruiser tank using their MGs. The other Cruiser continued to struggle as it tried to make it through the treeline. It got bogged, then unbogged, then bogged again. The British infantry continued their piecemeal attacks on the airfield. They continued to die and be driven off whenever they got too close to the German positions.

German Turn 12: More of the same with little effect—MGs vs. Cruiser, more artillery, and more British infantry forced to retreat in the face of extremely heavy German fire. By this time, Cpl. Dief and the other German troops patrolling south of the airfield had returned to the area of the airfield and planned to move forward for a more direct (and closer) attack on the Cruiser near the airfield HQ.

Allied Turn 12: Even though the British troops were having poor luck in their assaults on the airfield, a couple of their leaders became particularly stalwart, even heroic. For some reason, the British artillery adjusted 120m to the SW—AWAY from the German positions at the airfield. The German MGs intensified their fire on the Cruiser tank. Bullets finally penetrated its armor. The tank's crew fled the tank under the German's fire and took cover under and behind the tank. The few British troops in the area charged the control tower. All but one of the Brits were pinned down. One, very brave, wounded British trooper actually made it into the control tower, but he was quickly cut down.

German Turn 13: The Germans continued to drive away the British. Oblt. Klemmer and his engineers, armed to the teeth with flamethrowers and demolition charges, advanced away from their glider and into the treeline. Now, it would be even more difficult for the British to establish themselves to retake the airfield.

Allied Turn 13: The situation was looking bleak for the Allies. The artillery fire ended. The British troops were disorganized. Those that weren't had a lot of open ground to cover before they would be anywhere close to any of the buildings at the airfield. Some British seemed resigned that the airfield could not be retaken and began to dig foxholes. Still, a squad of bicycle troops charged into the treeline. This boldness so shocked Oblt. Klemmer and his men that they did not react. British troops in the treeline was nothing new to Oblt. Müller's men. Their fire annihilated the audacious Brits. More British made it to the treeline. This time, the Germans were unable to drive them all away. But, the Germans were well dug in at the airfield and they outnumbered the Allies in the area. This airfield was secure!

Situation at Mission End:

1x 9-1; 1x 8-0; 7x 548; 2x 468; 1x 248; 1x 247; 3x LMG; 3x MMG; 1x (Br.) ATR

Temporary assets attached: 1x SdKfz (Kettenrad)

Temporary reinforcements: 1x 9-1; 1x 548 (AE); 2x FT; 3x DC

German casualties were 27 KIA (including Hpt. Metzler and Sgt. Gibler) and 11 wounded. The Allies suffered far worse. Enemy casualties were estimated at 97 KIA and 36 wounded, including a Bren carrier and a Cruiser tank. The British AA guns were unmanned, but the Germans had not taken the time to capture the AA gun at the end of the runway. Kompanie C was relatively intact as a fighting unit, but had lost two of its most experienced leaders.

(Final battlefield map attached next page)

